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Canada's Role in Science and Technology for Development

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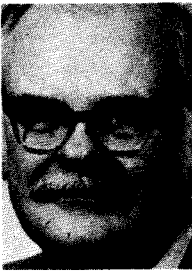
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International Development Office of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada



*Michael Oliver,
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May I say how very much I appreciated the lucid and enthusiastic presentations by Richard Griffiths and A. J. van Dulst. My reaction will be shared, I am sure, by all of those who have been working on similar questions within the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), and within CIDA and IDRC. The presentations described two organizations that were set up by the university community in their countries because of a feeling of obligation to international development and particularly to the universities in the developing countries. Establishing IUC and NUFFIC was an expression by the entire university community of the firmness and effectiveness of their intention to act. Each of these interuniversity organizations was given funds sufficient to

carry out its mandate from the government's international development organization. Where are we now in Canada in relation to the models that have been described to us by Griffiths and van Dulst? Well, the International Development Office has been in operation since January of this year. It is in its very early days, but I think it does represent the feeling by Canadian universities that they need a central coordinating body to help make policies and to assist and facilitate the work of our universities. However, it is different from the examples we have had described this morning. The Office does not receive the kind of funding that would enable it to give to Canadian universities the kind of encouragement that Griffiths talked about — the topping-up of salaries, the provision of needed equipment, the money for links, which, of course, are all part of the function that IUC can perform with the budget it has been given by the Ministry of Overseas Development.

Now I don't think that we in Canada want necessarily to take over the system that has proved to be advisable for the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. I do not think that we want blindly to follow other models: Griffiths has, I think, wisely stressed our need to think through our own forms. What I hope, though, is that we can evolve in our own ways, and what I think we are in the process of doing is getting an effective expression of our universities' commitment to the process of international development. Canadian universities are committed to get behind a body that can, first, help in the liaison with our major aid agencies, CIDA and IDRC; second, help evolve new policies and mechanisms that will facilitate and enhance the contributions of our universities; and, finally, reinvigorate those within our community of universities who have contributions that they want to make to overseas development.

We in Canada are still far behind Britain and the Netherlands in this kind of expression of corporate university commitment and action. We have made a beginning, however, and I have been very encouraged by the support that, during the course of my visits throughout the university community, our office has received. And I am optimistic that, as we feel our way in Canada, we will eventually come up with the kind of intermediary body between government and universities, trusted by both and facilitating the aims of both, that Griffiths and van Dulst have described to us in their extraordinarily useful presentations.

Michael Oliver is Director of the International Development Office of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, and former President of Carleton University.